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SUBJECT: CODEL MCCAIN MEETS WITH KING ABDULLAH

AMMAN 00002325 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (S) Summary: King Abdullah briefed Codel McCain on his proposal to help pacify Anbar province, discussed Iraq, Iran, Hamas, and his effort to convene a conference of Iraqi religious leaders. He accused Syrian intelligence of giving a green light to terrorists seeking to carry out attacks in Jordan. End summary.

¶2. (C) Senator McCain,s delegation met with King Abdullah at his private office in Amman on March 26. The delegation also included Senators Feingold and Thune; Congressmen Udall, Kirk, and Schwarz; and Governors Pawlenty (Minnesota), Huntsman (Utah), and Riley (Alabama). Queen Rania, Farouk Kasrawy and Abdullah Woreikat of the King,s office, Rania Attallah of the Queen,s office, and Ambassador also attended.

¶3. (C) McCain told the King that the U.S. was grateful for Jordan,s friendship and for its support for U.S. efforts on Iraq, on Hamas, and on counterterrorism. McCain said he understood the King,s disappointment that a proposal for additional assistance for Jordan had not made it into the recent supplemental budget.

Iraq

¶4. (C) McCain had just left Iraq hours earlier, and told the King the situation was difficult there. He urged key Iraqi politicians to form a unity government; they needed to show progress within weeks. Ambassador Khalilzad was doing a great job, but Iraqi leaders weren,t doing their part. &I was honest with them) support for the U.S. effort in Iraq is slipping in the U.S.8 Senator McCain said the process of recovery in Iraq had been moving slowly. Oil production was weak; the U.S. was now launching a major effort to address this, &but why did it have to wait three years?8 McCain said the morale of U.S. troops was high, even though in the Sunni triangle and other areas they were &in a very tough situation.8

¶5. (C) The next six months would be critical. Senator McCain said the American people may not appreciate the catastrophic consequences if the U.S. were to fail in Iraq. Governor Riley agreed that most Americans didn,t understand why there had been so much delay in forming a unity government; the U.S. effort in Iraq was &losing support at home.8

¶6. (C) The King agreed that achieving a national unity government was key. It was particularly important that Iraq have new, non-sectarian defense and interior ministers. The King was worried about the influence of the Badr forces in Iraq,s security services. Senator McCain asked about

Jordan,s border with Iraq. The King expressed confidence that the GOJ was deterring or intercepting Jordanians and others who might want to cross directly into Iraq to join the insurgency; the GOJ was also watching out for military age men who might try to travel via Syria. Another priority was preventing further terrorists entering Jordan. Jordan was checking all vehicles entering from Iraq. He said a &Badr commander8 at the Iraq/Jordan border crossing point was of particular concern.

The King,s Anbar Plan

¶17. (C) Governor Huntsman observed that governments with an interest in events in Iraq) especially in the GCC) had not contributed sufficiently to the effort there. The King replied that many wanted to help, but weren,t sure where to do it. In Anbar, there were many potential opportunities to assist) for instance at a phosphates mine that could provide many jobs) but security was always the problem. What was needed was an integrated political, military and reconstruction plan. With security, it would be possible to create positive momentum. The King said that during his January 2006 visit to Washington he had proposed such a plan to U.S. officials, which he described to the delegation.

¶18. (C) The King said that last fall the GOJ made contact &with responsible governments in the region8 who had influence in Iraq) Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Kuwait) and coordinated with moderates in Anbar among the Sunnis. &I think we had an impact8 on Sunnis, participation in the December general elections.

To Contain Iran, Rebuild Iraq; Pressure Hamas and Syria

¶19. (C) Senator Feingold complemented the King for his leadership, and asked for his thoughts on Iran. The King said that of the chief challenges facing the region --

AMMAN 00002325 002.5 OF 002

Al-Qaeda, Iraq, oil, nuclear proliferation, Syria,s behavior, Hizballah, and Hamas) Iran,s &thumbprint8 was on them all except for Al-Qaeda. The Iranians &have an obsession8 controlling the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala; these towns had turned into a strategic matter for them. The best way to contain Iran was to build an independent, capable Iraq.

¶10. (C) In order to respond to Iran,s challenge on this range of fronts, support for Hamas needed to be cut off. The international community &needs to make it fail.8 Hizballah should also be isolated, and the Syrian regime further weakened.

¶11. (C) &We all need to make sure that Hamas does not get off the hook8 and avoid the pressure to meet the international community,s three conditions. In the King,s analysis, Hamas must inevitably either transform itself into a legitimate governing party, or go back to its &old tricks8 of terrorism and political action in tandem. The King thought the latter course more likely.

¶12. (C) (NOTE: CODEL McCain,s meeting with the King was two days prior to Israeli elections. END NOTE.) The Israeli elections would be key. The King had praise for Olmert, whom he thought in a good position to win, but it was hard to make reliable predictions about Israeli politics. Olmert was &a man of peace,8 an ally in the peace process. &If Bibi were to win8, though, the region would find itself with &a more radical Israel8 at the same time it had a radical Hamas in the ascendant; this could only mean more trouble.

¶13. (C) It would help the situation considerably if aid could be channeled to Abu Mazen -- &he,s ready now8) and organizations under his control, through &a system with checks and balances8 to ensure money didn,t get to Hamas.

The King said he would soon present the U.S. with a paper with ideas on how this might be done. There are 150,000 Palestinian civil servants who might go unpaid if Hamas defies the international community. Hamas didn't care, though; &they were all loyal to Fatah.8 The King remained confident Hamas would fail. This would show the people of the Middle East the true face of the region,s religious extremists, he said.

Syria

¶14. (S) The Syrian border was a problem. The GOJ had intercepted several explosives belts being smuggled in from Syria. The GOJ had discovered six caches of dangerous materials, and had information that four would-be suicide bombers are now in Syria looking for a chance to cross into Jordan. McCain expressed surprise that the Syrians weren't worried about &backlash8 against them. The King said the SARG wants instability to distract the U.S. He claimed Syrian intelligence was now giving a green light to terrorists to mount operations across the Jordanian border.

Moderate Islam

¶15. (C) The delegation praised the King,s speech in February at the National Prayer Breakfast Luncheon in Washington. The King replied that he planned to build on the November, 2004 Amman Message on moderate Islam, and on the conferences that followed it, with a new initiative, a conference of Iraqi religious leaders that would convene in Amman soon. The King,s aides were working out the communiqu in advance with the leading participants; it would give Iraqi religious leaders a prominent platform from which to stress that Iraqis are one people, opposed to violence. The King hoped to get advice from the delegation in the coming weeks on how he could extend to American Muslims his campaign of &outreach in the name of moderate Islam.8 The King wanted to help Muslim moderates throughout the world counter extremists.

¶16. (U) Codel McCain did not have an opportunity to review this message.

HALE